

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 7, 8, 13, and 14 are currently pending. Claims 1, 7, and 13 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 7, and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,999,273 to Casey et al. (hereinafter “the ‘273 patent”); and Claims 2, 8, and 14 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Amended Claim 1 is directed to an image forming apparatus for making gray-scale images, the image forming apparatus comprising: (1) a dot status detector configured to detect an occurrence in which a dot exists at a focus dot position and no dot exists at both positions immediately adjacent to the focus dot position in the main scan direction; and (2) a density adjuster configured to convert a writing level of the dot at the focus dot position to a first value when the dot status detector detects the occurrence, and to convert the writing level of the dot at the focus dot position to a second value, different from the first value, when the dot status detector does not detect the occurrence. The changes to Claim 1 are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.¹

The ‘273 patent is directed to a method of decreasing toner in a solid area development for specifying pixels defining solid image areas and selectively modulating a beam with regard to the specified pixels to change the state of the pixels from black to gray or partial white. As shown in Figure 3, the ‘273 patent discloses a system in which an area of black pixels can be extended in the x direction. Further, as shown in Figures 6A-7C, the ‘273

¹ See, e.g., Figure 15 and the discussion related thereto in the specification.

patent discloses a system in which the center pixel of 9 black pixels can be changed from black to partial white. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the '273 patent fails to disclose a dot status detector configured to detect an occurrence in which a dot exists at a focus dot position and does not exist at both positions immediately adjacent to the focus dot position in the main scanning direction, as recited in Claim 1. The embodiment shown in Figures 6A-7C of the '273 patent detects a 3x3 matrix of black pixels. Further, in the embodiment of '273 Figure 3, a 4x4 area of black pixels surrounded by white pixels is detected. However, the '273 patent does not disclose the detection of an occurrence at which a dot exists at a focus dot position and no dot exists at both positions immediately adjacent to the focus dot position in the main scanning direction, as recited in Claim 1. Moreover, because the '273 patent does not disclose the dot status detector recited in Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that the '273 patent cannot disclose the density adjuster configured to convert a writing level of the dot at the focus dot position when the dot status detector detects the occurrence. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of Claim 1 as anticipated by the '273 patent.

Independent Claims 7 and 13 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 1. Moreover, Claims 7 and 13 have been amended in a manner analogous to the amendment to Claim 1. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above for the patentability of Claim 1, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of Claims 7 and 13.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1, 7, and 13 patentably define over the '273 patent.

Application No. 10/812,964
Reply to Office Action of July 10, 2006

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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